

without shifting the risk onto the backs of individuals. This is meaningful, responsible legislation, and I intend to do my best to make sure my colleagues give it the hearing it deserves.

H.R. 475, MILITARY SPOUSES

HON. PATSY T. MINK

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, recently I introduced H.R. 475, extending eligibility to use the military health care system and commissary stores to un-remarried former spouses of a member of the uniformed services in certain circumstances.

Current law provides health and commissary benefits to un-remarried former spouses who meet the 20/20/20 rule—those who were married to military personnel for at least 20 years, whose spouse served in the military for at least 20 years, and whose marriage and spouse's military service overlapped for 20 years.

A problem that frequently arises is that many members who retire upon attaining 20 years of service were married a year or two after entering active duty. The overlap of their service and marriage is just short of 20 years. Thus regardless of the subsequent length of marriage the spouse can never meet the criteria requiring the 20 year overlap.

H.R. 475 would eliminate this current inequity by extending to un-remarried former spouse's medical care and commissary benefits if the member performed at least 20 years of service which is creditable in determining the member's eligibility for retired pay and the former spouse was married to the member for a period of at least 17 years during those years of service.

This inequity affects not only individuals in my district, but spouses in every district across the Nation. Since the original introduction of this legislation, I have received letters and phone calls from Massachusetts, Idaho, California, Ohio, Arizona, Florida, Washington, Maryland, Kansas, and Utah.

The Department of Defense has stated that by providing a more liberal entitlement to these individuals, we would "tax" the Department's resources thus increasing the budgetary requirements. Well, I say it is worth it when I read about a woman from Arizona who was married to her husband for 36 years, but because she married him 1 year after his initial enlistment, she missed the 20-20-20 rule by 11 months. These stories are tragic, and we can do something to remedy this unfairness.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 475.

TRIBUTE TO BEVERLY PANKRAT
OF GIRL SCOUT TROOP 563

HON. SPENCER BACHUS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to salute an outstanding young woman

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

who has been honored with the Girl Scout Gold Award by the Cahaba Girl Scout Council in Birmingham, Alabama. She is Beverly Pankrat of Girl Scout Troop 563. She has been honored for earning the highest achievement award in U.S. Girl Scouting. The Girl Scout Gold Award symbolizes outstanding accomplishments in the areas of leadership, community service, career planning and personal development. The award can be earned by a girl aged fourteen through seventeen, or in grades ninth through twelfth.

Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., an organization serving over 2.5 million girls, has awarded more than twenty thousand Girl Scout Awards to Senior Girl Scouts since the inception of the program in 1980. To receive the award, a Girl Scout must earn four interest project patches, the Career Exploration Pin, the Senior Girl Scout Challenge, as well as design and implement a Girl Scout Gold Award project. A plan for fulfilling these requirements is created by the Senior Girl Scout and carried out through close cooperation between the girl and an adult Girl Scout Volunteer.

As a member of the Cahaba Girl Scout Council, Beverly Pankrat began working toward the Girl Scout Gold Award on November 9, 1997. She completed her project, Introduction to the Internet and Web Page Design, and I believe she should receive the public recognition due her for this significant service to her community and her country.

TRIBUTE TO HERNANDO PINZON—
RETIRING AFTER 15 YEARS OF
CONGRESSIONAL SERVICE

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to Hernando Pinzon, of Milwaukee, who will retire March 31, 1999, after 15 years of dedicated service on my District Office Staff.

Hernando was one of my very first hires when I was elected to Congress in a special election in the spring 1984. He has tirelessly served the residents of Wisconsin's 4th Congressional District ever since.

Hernando has a sign on his Milwaukee office door which reads "I put veterans first. May I help you?" That statement sums up Hernando's dedication to the men and women who have served, or who are currently serving, in our nation's armed forces. As my constituent liaison for veterans and military issues, Hernando works daily to ensure that these individuals receive the benefits and honors they deserve. From handling insurance and retirement matters for military families, to obtaining well-deserved military medals for service men and women that were overdue many years ago, Hernando certainly puts veterans first.

As my District Office liaison for Hispanic issues, Hernando has attended countless Hispanic Chamber of Commerce meetings and events on Milwaukee's south side. He has truly been my "eyes and ears" at Hispanic events, bringing numerous issues to my attention and making it known to the community that I am ready and willing to help.

But Hernando's first priority is of course his family. His wife Maria and his two children Carla and Hernando are the real joys of his life. I know that he is looking forward to spending more time at home. In fact I understand that Maria has enough remodeling projects lined up to keep him busy around the house for quite some time!

Best wishes, Hernando, on your well-deserved retirement. We will miss your dedication, your patience, and your quiet humor. May you and your children enjoy the years to come by bicycling, hiking and fishing as you have enjoyed many Milwaukee summertimes in the past. God Bless.

SOCIAL SECURITY EARNINGS
LIMIT CLARIFICATION

HON. STEVEN T. KUYKENDALL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to clarify some comments I made on this floor last Thursday. Specifically, I spoke about the earnings limits now imposed by the Social Security laws. To clarify, there are two separate limits, one for individuals under the age of 65, and another for individuals between the age of 65 and 69. In 1999, those limits are \$9,600 and \$15,500, respectively. Individuals under the age of 65 with annual earnings of \$20,000 stand to lose \$5,200. Individuals between the ages of 65 and 69 with annual earnings of \$20,000 stand to lose \$1,500. In either event, individuals with critical expertise are encouraged not to work, to the detriment of all Americans.

JOHNSTON ATOLL

HON. PATSY T. MINK

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, recently I introduced H.R. 478, that requires the National Labor Relations Board to assert jurisdiction over Johnston Atoll.

Johnston Atoll is an unincorporated territory located about 800 miles southwest of Hawaii. Currently, the atoll is being used for weapons disposal where military and civilian employees work with hazardous materials and under potentially dangerous conditions to dispose of chemical weapons.

Civilian workers presently on the island cannot seek the protection of safe and fair working conditions as normally provided to workers in the United States because the civilian workers on Johnston Atoll are not under the jurisdiction of the NLRB.

This is a problem that is going on 9 years. In a petition before the NLRB in 1990, 185 employees of the civilian contractor were denied recognition as a bargaining unit by the Board because the Board declined to assert jurisdiction over the territory of Johnston Atoll.

My legislation recognizes this injustice and simply states that the Board cannot decline to

assert jurisdiction over a labor dispute which occurs on Johnston Atoll.

Without my legislation, these workers are left without any recourse. There is no State or local agency to assist them, and the one entity established by Congress to protect them has declined to do so. This is a situation that we can easily remedy. By enacting H.R. 478, we provide the workers on Johnston Atoll the same protections as the rest of the Nation. I urge my colleagues to rectify this situation and support this bill.

**POLITICALLY MOTIVATED
ARRESTS IN BELARUS**

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to decry the growing litany of repressive measures undertaken by the Government of Belarus against the opposition, especially against members of the opposition's Central Electoral Commission (CEC). Earlier this year, the legitimate Belarusian parliament—the 13th Supreme Soviet, disbanded by president Alexander Lukashenka after the illegal constitutional referendum which extended his term of office by two years to 2001—set a date for the next presidential elections for May 16 and set up a Central Election Commission to conduct these elections. According to the 1994 constitution, which most of the international community recognizes as legitimate, Lukashenka's term expires in July. Lukashenka has rejected calls for a presidential election and is clearly attempting to neutralize democratic opposition to his authoritarian rule. The most egregious crackdown in recent weeks was the sentencing of CEC chairman Viktor Hanchar, to 10 days "administrative detention". Hanchar suffered some injuries when he was detained and treated roughly by police. He was not given access to his lawyer, Hari Pahanyayla, and his wife was not permitted to see him.

A few days earlier, on February 25, fifteen members of the CEC were arrested by police in a café where they were meeting and discussing reports from local election commissions. Special police did not have a warrant and prevented the videotaping of the arrest by Russian television. Five-day detentions or heavy fines were meted out to several CEC members, including Boris Gyunter, Anatoly Gurinovich, Sergei Obodovsky, Iosif Naumchik, Algimantas Dzyarginchus, Alexander Koktysh, Nikolay Pohabov, Valery Sidorenko and Leonid Zakurdayev. Additionally, warnings have been issued to several members of regional opposition elections committees, such as Iosif Naumchik in Vitebsk and Sergei Abadowski in Mogilev. According to Radio Liberty, in Zhodzina, Miensk region, local authorities have begun intimidating people who joined or elected opposition regional election commissions. In Gomel, several opposition activists have been summoned and questioned about their role in the organization of the May presidential elections scheduled

by the opposition. Police had seized leaflets about these elections at the office of the Gomel branch of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee.

The repression of the opposition's elections committees is part of a longstanding pattern of Lukashenka's assault on democratic institutions and his campaign to stifle dissent in Belarus. On February 14, 20 students were arrested by police in Miensk for violating street demonstration laws. Among them, Yevgeny Skochko was sentenced to 10 days in jail, Victor Antonov to 5 days in jail, and Kazimir Kuchun and Ilya Banel were fined. Other opposition activists in Gomel and Borisov have been tried for unsanctioned demonstrations over the last few months. Two young workers in Gomel, for instance, were sentenced to 3 days administrative detention for holding an unsanctioned march. According to Reuters, the men were returning from a disco late in the evening and waving banners, which they were bringing home to wash.

Earlier in the month, on February 5, members of the human rights movement Charter '97 were attacked and beaten in Miensk by members of the fascist Russian National Unity party. Andrei Sannikov, the Charter's international coordinator and former deputy foreign minister of Belarus was beaten unconscious. According to the International League for Human Rights a few days later, President Lukashenka trivialized the incident on Belarusian television, saying: "They say that some fascists have appeared in Miensk and have beaten somebody up. Do you know who they have beaten? Other fascists." On February 27, several thousand marchers participated in a peaceful anti-fascist demonstration in Miensk. Organizers of the demonstration, Ales Bilyatsky who was sentenced to 10 days administrative detention and Oleg Volchek who was given a stiff fine, were cited for committing administrative offenses.

In late January, Lukashenka signed a decree ordering political parties, public organizations and trade unions to re-register during the period February 1 and July 1. The re-registration process includes a variety of onerous stipulations which would have the effect of weakening the NGOs and political parties. On February 17, the Lukashenka-controlled State Press Committee threatened six independent newspapers with closure if they continued to publish information about the opposition's presidential election plans in May, charging them with "calling for the seizure of power in Belarus." On March 2, police searched the offices of one of the six independent newspapers, "Pahonya" in Hrodno, confiscating political cartoons and letters from readers.

Clearly, political tensions are increasing in Belarus, and the divide between the authoritarian president and the democratic opposition is widening. Mr. Lukashenka and his minions should cease and desist their campaign to harass journalists, to drain and demoralize individuals and organizations in the opposition through administrative fines and detentions, and to forcefully squelch the right to the freedoms of expression and of assembly. Continued harassment of the opposition will only aggravate the current constitutional crisis in

Belarus and most certainly will not serve to promote reconciliation between the government and opposition. Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that the international community continue to speak out on behalf of those whose rights are violated, and that we continue to support the restoration of democracy and rule of law in Belarus.

**TRIBUTE TO THE CREW OF THE
U.S.S. "PHAON"**

HON. JAMES M. TALENT

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to praise the officer and crew of the U.S.S. *Phaon*, and their sister ships within the Mobile Service Squadrons. Although often overlooked, their contribution to the War in the Pacific was central to U.S. and allied success in that theater.

A close reading of history will show that America's naval strategy in the Pacific theater, which called for the ability to maintain continuous operations at extreme distances from American port facilities, was in a very real sense made possible through the efforts and sacrifice of the Navy's logistics repair squadrons.

Japan's wartime plans envisioned an active defense across the periphery of its sphere of control, thus denying the United States the bases from which to launch and support offensive operations. Their leadership never prepared for the likelihood that their own forces, operating at extended distances from home port, would be forced to fight against an American navy that would develop and refine the ability to conduct nearly continuous offensive operations. Under Admirals Halsey and Spruance, the Japanese would commit to battle at one point and then find themselves overextended, or "whipsawed," as American forces struck elsewhere. "Hit 'em where they ain't."

Underpinning this effort, and indeed making much of America's success in the Pacific possible, were the essential contributions made by the Navy's mobile Service Squadrons, which provided at-sea battle damage repair in order to return vessels to combat duty as quickly as possible. The *Phaon*, a battle damage repair ship within Mobile Service Squadron Ten, and her sister ships, materially contributed to fleet support at Tawara, Kwayalein, Eniwetok, Saipan and Tinian. In the words of historian Eric Larrabee, "[t]he fleet had become truly free of its landbound bases."

While much glory is rightly given to the front-line combatants, it is important that we should also recognize the contributions and the sacrifice of our combat support personnel who made ultimate victory possible.